



Radial Ice Changes Overview

In Effect Winter 2026

Standardization of Forecasting Radial Ice

Beginning winter of 2026, the National Weather Service (NWS) will standardize forecasting and reporting radial ice, replacing the previous policy of forecasting “elevated flat ice”.

What This Means:

In efforts to better communicate impacts from ice, the NWS will begin forecasting and reporting radial ice, rather than flat ice. **Radial ice is defined as the measured radius of ice on an elevated radial surface** (tree branch, power line, clothesline, etc). By standardizing the measuring and reporting of radial ice, the NWS is better able to convey infrastructure impacts of ice amounts on tree branches and power lines, especially factoring in the addition of high winds.

Radial vs. Flat Ice Conversion:

Radial ice measurements will be about **60% less** than flat surfaces. To further understand how to measure radial ice, see page two.

$$\text{Radial Ice} = 0.394 \times \text{Flat Ice}$$

How This Affects Advisories/Warnings:

Just because radial ice amounts are 60% less than flat ice amounts, the impacts of the ice are no less significant for a given amount. With the technical lowered measurements, Winter Storm Warnings may be issued based on expected ice load and wind impacts, rather than definitive criteria, as warning criteria is not changing. To compare radial vs. flat ice for the latest forecast, visit the winter/ice tab on [weather.gov/akq/Brief](https://www.weather.gov/akq/Brief) for a reference of the two.

<i>Radial Ice</i>	<i>Flat Ice</i>	
0.01-0.04"	0.01-0.09"	Winter Weather Advisory criteria (based on 0.04" - 0.24" radial ice)
0.05-0.09"	0.10-0.24"	
0.10-0.14"	0.25-0.49"	
0.15-0.24"	0.50-0.74"	
0.25-0.49"	0.75-0.99"	Winter Storm Warning criteria* (based on 0.25" - 0.75"+ radial ice)
0.50-0.74"	1.00-1.99"	
0.75" +	2.00" +	

* Winter Storm Warnings may be issued based on expected amounts and impacts, rather than criteria.





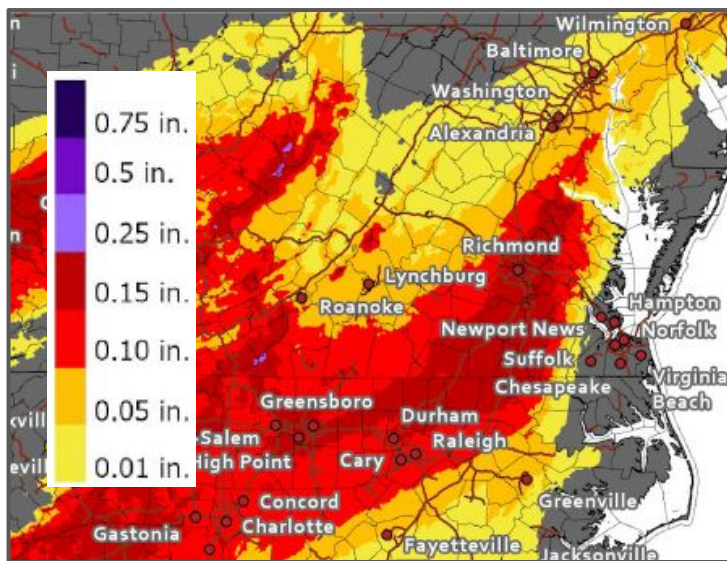
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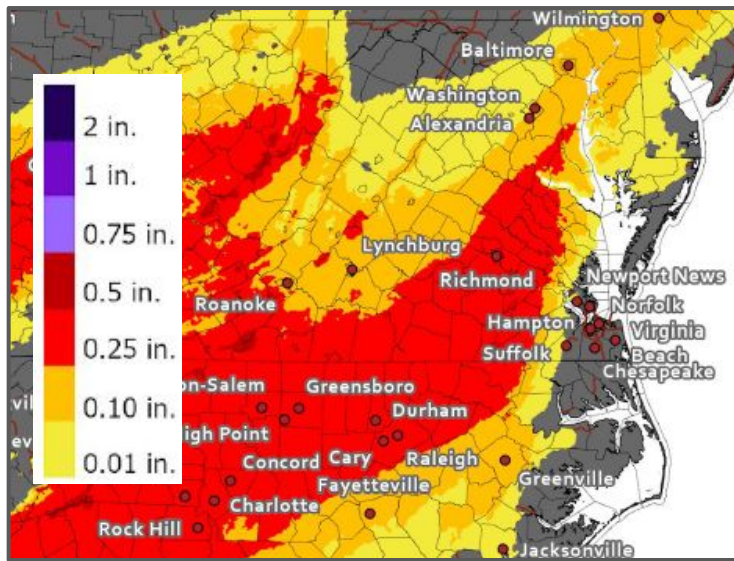
Example Forecast:

Below is an example of a radial vs. flat ice forecast based on the January 2026 ice storm. Note that the colors are largely the same, but the radial ice forecast scale has darker red colors since the legend is more granular from lowered amounts indicative of ice impacts.

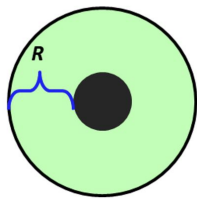
Radial Ice Forecast



Flat Ice Forecast

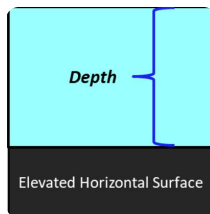


Measuring Radial Ice:



Radial Ice

Measured on an **elevated cylindrical surface**, such as a tree branch.



Flat Ice

Measured on an **elevated horizontal surface**, such as a table or deck.

1. Locate an ice-covered object that is out in the open, such as a small tree branch.
2. Position yourself to see both the thickest and thinnest ice portions around the entire object.
3. Measure the thickest part of the ice, from the edge of the object to the edge of the ice.
4. Measure the thinnest part of the ice using the same method.
5. Average the two measurements (add together and divide by two) to calculate radial ice.



Total Measurement = 1.00"
Branch = 0.50"

Total Flat Ice Thickness = 0.50"

Radial Ice Thickness = 0.25"
(Flat Ice x 0.394)